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DE RUEHDG #0769/01 1402058  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH (CCY AD9470A3 MSI6717-695)  
R 192058Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0742  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 000769

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y ((ADDED CAPTION))

STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [DR](#)  
SUBJECT: POLICE KILLINGS - A CAUSE OF CONCERN

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The recent spate of police killings in Santo Domingo and Boca Chica highlight a disturbing trend of deaths at the hands of police, often attributed to "exchanges of gunfire." In both incidents, police demonstrated improper adherence to police and judicial procedures and used excessive force resulting in seven civilian deaths, three of whom were minors. However, the subsequent police response of quickly investigating and dismissing accused police officials from the force may be a silver lining, as historically police officials have been reluctant to admit wrongdoing and have been prone to covering up any police misconduct. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On May 2, three youths, eighteen year-old Lander Beltran, alias Buggyman, sixteen year old Nayrobi Caminero Manzanillo, and Jason Jeffrey Mena, were suspected of robbing a store in Bello Campo, Santo Domingo. Neighborhood residents witnessing the robbery formed a mob, captured and beat the youths before turning them over to the police. Eyewitnesses saw the youths alive when the police took them into custody. A home video also captured the police roughly man-handling and dragging the youths into the back of a pick-up truck. Their bullet ridden bodies were found later.

¶3. (SBU) At the same day in La Caleta, Boca Chica, four civilians were also killed by the police. The police version of the events stated that Lieutenant Colonel Galis Manuel Cordero, accompanied by Captain Valentin Encarnacion, First Lieutenant Narciso Lugo Ramirez and suspected thief Rafael Arias alias Chipa (who was arrested earlier in Las Americas airport), were in La Caleta to recover, from the house of a person named Deysi, part of the USD\$400,000 stolen from a United Parcel Services (UPS) office several months ago. While at the residence, Deysi screamed she was being robbed, leading to various neighborhood residents coming to her aid by throwing rocks and shooting at the police. In the ensuing melee, numerous shots were fired resulting in the killing of Cordero and four civilians. In another version, residents claimed the police themselves shot the colonel in an attempt to expropriate the recovered money and shot those who witnessed the shooting to cover up. The Attorney General's office disagreed with the official police version calling into question the lack of knowledge of the operation by police higher-ups, a search or arrest warrant, and the required presence of a public prosecutor; the use of plainclothes by the police; as well as carrying out of the operation at night, which is contrary to police procedure.

¶4. (SBU) In the Santo Domingo case, after an investigation by police Internal Affairs, the police determined that the victims were shot by the police. The police hierarchy acted upon the results of the investigation and dismissed Major Domingo Antonio Diaz Rodriguez, First Lieutenant Nicolas

Martinez and Second Lieutenant Lorenzo Rodriguez Martes from the force and passed their cases to the Attorney General's office for prosecution. On May 8, a judge ordered Diaz Rodriguez, Martinez, and Rodriguez Martes be remanded to one year preventative custody in Najayo prison. Preventative custody is often recommended to prevent flight of suspects. The following police were also sent to jail for thirty days for "negligence, lack of tact, and not observing the prudence required by the circumstances," First Lieutenants Nicolas Martinez, Alejandro Valenzuela Ditren, Corporal Tineo Rafael Rosario and Privates Rafael A. Pichardo Jimenez and Frangel A. Grullon Pineda.

15. (SBU) In the Boca Chica case, police investigators found two pistols and numerous shell casings within the vicinity of the incident. The shell casings corresponded to the two pistols found as well as to the service weapons of the police. The investigators, however, were unable to determine who shot Cordero as the projectile was never recovered after passing through Cordero. The police have detained civilians Jose Antonio Beltre Montero and Hector Antonio Carrion Lopez in connection with the incident. The police recommended that Encarnacion and Lugo Ramirez be dismissed from the police force and be charged criminally along with civilians Beltre Montero and Carrion Lopez. The Dominican Attorney General Radhames Jimenez stated that his office will demand the thirty year maximum sentence for any police officer found guilty. On May 7, a judge ordered Encarnacion and Lugo Ramirez be remanded to a year of preventative custody in Najayo prison.

16. (U) These cases come on the heels of media reports that in an eight month period from August 2007 to March 2008, 142 people have been killed in "exchanges of gunfire" with the police. The Attorney General's office, however, reported that 189 people have died in these "exchanges of gunfire" while 173 individuals were killed by the police in course of their duty within a seven month period from January to August 2007.

17. (SBU) Comment: The number of killings in alleged "exchanges of gunfire" has increased in recent years. Both the present and previous police chiefs have dismissed police officers for grave and serious misconduct but this has done little to curb such killings. However, it is encouraging that the police immediately investigated the latest incidents, determined the youths in Santo Domingo were killed while in police custody, and dismissed the accused police officials and turned them over to the Attorney General for prosecution. It remains to be seen whether these actions are enough to reduce the propensity of local police to resort to deadly force or are the harbinger of increase transparency in the police institution. End Comment.  
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